



CAPITOL CONNECTION

May 2019

Taking action statewide for a Sustainable Hawai‘i

For sustainability, the phrase “Think global, act local” has come to mean more with each year of the Ige administration. It means growing more of our own food, focusing on clean energy solutions and nurturing a new generation committed to protecting our islands and island Earth from climate change. Hawai‘i’s leadership has been recognized worldwide for its commitment to sustainable values and practices. This issue highlights some of the progress being made as we transform aspirations into action.

Q. Hawai‘i has drawn global attention for its leadership on sustainability. Why did you make this a priority of your administration?

A. Sustainability is more than what is good for the environment. It’s fundamental to changing the economy of the state, to stop exporting resources and invest more in creating jobs here in the islands. It means incorporating new technology, but also embracing traditional cultural values. We can learn from thriving Hawaiian communities of the past who were sustainable and self-sufficient, and update those practices for today.



GLOBAL GOALS, LOCAL ACTION: Gov. Ige joined House speaker Scott Saiki, Senate president Ron Kouchi and other community leaders April 18 at the Capitol to celebrate the state as a United Nations partner.

Q. Why is the designation of Hawai‘i as a United Nations Local 2030 hub so important?

A. We should all be proud because the designation recognizes the work we’ve done through our collective efforts, Hawai‘i Green Growth, and the Aloha+ Challenge as well as the worldwide Mālama Honua voyage of the Hōkūle‘a. The models we develop in the islands of the Pacific can be models for the world. We’re tracking statewide progress through the Aloha+ Challenge Dashboard and holding ourselves accountable. This reinforces Hawai‘i as a major player in the sustainability and climate change discussion.



Hōkūle‘a navigator Nainoa Thompson and Gov. Ige.

Q. What do you want people to know about progress on the Sustainable Hawai‘i plan? Why is it important to set ambitious goals?

A. The goals are valuable because we want to ensure that the decisions we make today advance us to long-term goals, such as 100 percent clean, renewable energy. We know we can’t save the planet by ourselves, but having these goals allows us to elevate the issues and talk on a national and global level to recognize that climate change is real so we can take action together. As the chair of the Western Governors Association, I’ve made biosecurity a focus because it’s an issue for all our states.

Q. Why is the new GEM\$ on-bill initiative by the Hawai‘i Green Infrastructure Authority significant? (See story on Page 2.)

A. The GEM\$ program is a way to reach everyone in our community, especially renters and others who couldn’t afford to install more expensive, energy-saving measures. It helps people support our clean energy goals while also reducing their electricity bill.

Q. What signs of progress are you seeing in increasing local agriculture?

A. We have businesses who have heard about our commitment to doubling local food production and are interested in making significant investments here. The whole farm-to-school ‘Aina Pono initiative in the public schools has done a great job of incorporating more local products. There’s a real commitment by everyone to seeing how we can better coordinate local farm production. Projects such as the Whitmore Food Hub can help many smaller farmers.

GEM\$: Making clean energy affordable for consumers

Governor Ige has announced a new, innovative program to make green energy installments such as solar water heaters and photovoltaic panels more accessible and affordable for homeowners, renters, small businesses and non-profits. The **Green Energy Money \$aver (GEM\$) on-bill program** is the result of a collaborative effort among energy leaders from the public and private sectors.

The on-bill repayment program allows electric ratepayers on O’ahu, Hawai’i island, Maui, Lāna’i and Moloka’i to invest in green energy installments to immediately lower their utility bill and use the estimated savings to cover the costs of installation. Repayments are conveniently paid through monthly electric bills, which means there are no additional loan payments.

“We’re proud to be offering ratepayers this on-bill option,” said the governor. “This will give everyone the opportunity to do their part to reduce our state’s use of fossil fuels and greenhouse gases.” For more details about the program, go to gems.hawaii.gov or email dbedt.gems@hawaii.gov or call (808) 587-3868.



Gov. Ige announces new GEM\$ initiative with Murray Clay, Ulupono managing partner; Jay Griffin, Public Utilities Commission chair; Gwen Yamamoto-Lau, director of Hawaii Green Infrastructure Authority; and Scott Seu, VP at HECO.

How you can help guard against invasive pests



HDOA specialist Kailee Lefebvre with coconut rhinoceros beetle.

Find them before they find you.” That warning about little fire ants in Hawai’i should scare anyone since stings can cause blindness in pets, severe pain and allergic reactions in people and damage to crops and wildlife. Infestations have been found on nearly every island in the state. The good news is that the ants and other invasives can be eliminated in an area if found early enough.

That’s why the Hawai’i Invasive Species Council (HISC) is urging everyone to become more informed and vigilant about helping the state monitor invasive outbreaks before they become too widespread to manage. “Invasive species impact every aspect of our lives,” said HISC coordinator Josh Atwood. “The public is our eyes and ears to find new infestations. The state can’t be everywhere so we rely on people to report invasive species sightings to us.”

In addition to the fire ants, state agencies have been working together to monitor the spread of albizia trees; rapid ‘ōhi’a death, which threatens vital watershed forests; and mosquitos, which can spread disease, such as zika and dengue fever. The Ige administration has developed the state’s first interagency biosecurity plan and works with the volunteer invasive species committees on each island to monitor threats and take action where needed.



Governor Ige, as chair of the Western Governors’ Association, has made biosecurity a priority and is holding discussions with experts from other states and across the Pacific to talk about how they can work together. “The governor’s support has helped to bring more attention to the issue,” said Atwood. “He’s also emphasized the importance of getting more funding and positions.”

At a recent public forum sponsored by the state Department of Agriculture and the Department of Land and Natural Resources, speaker after speaker described the need for more staffing in the war against invasives as well as public awareness of what citizens can do to help. “We save so much in costs to the state by investing in people to do this work,” said Atwood. “It affects virtually every aspect of our lives — our health, economy, culture, and agriculture. Call HDOA’s statewide pest hotline at **643- PEST** to report any invasive pests and go to www.stoptheant.org for easy ways to test for little fire ants.

State on target to beat 2020 greenhouse gas emissions goal

Hawai’i is on target to meet the state’s goal established by the Legislature 12 years ago to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to equal to or below 1990 levels. That’s the good news from a recent report prepared for the state Department of Health (DOH). “We know that bending the curve of emissions down by 2020 gives the world the best opportunity to prevent the worst effects of climate change,” said Governor Ige.

DOH director Dr. Bruce Anderson added, “Hawai’i is on the right path, but we must continue to stay on track. Everyone must do their part to continue these efforts.”

The report tracked data on greenhouse gas emissions, primarily carbon dioxide from energy, transportation and industrial sectors as well as the effect of “sinks” that remove CO2 from the atmosphere through reforestation and urban trees.

Growing, buying local matters for sustainability

How do you get people talking about increasing food production in Hawai'i? One way, Governor Ige found, was to set an ambitious — even controversial — goal and a projected timeline to meet it. “By saying we wanted to double local food production by 2020, the governor put a target out there and drew attention to the issue,” said new director Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser at the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA).

The result has been more awareness of the islands' food vulnerability (we import around 85 percent of what we consume) and the need to help local farmers grow more of what we eat. The latest U.S. Department of Agriculture census released last month brought encouraging news. It

showed a **5 percent increase** since 2012 in the total number of farms in Hawai'i — from 7,000 in 2012 to 7,328 in 2017 — especially among small farms between one to nine acres. “The increase in new farmers is heartening,” said Shimabukuro-Geiser. “We want consumers to continue to buy local because it really does have an impact on our community.”

The challenges for local food production are many: balancing land and water issues, supporting farmers — from young start-ups to mid-size family operations, promoting investments by larger companies, encouraging environmental “best practices,” and helping farmers meet rigorous federal food safety requirements. But Shimabukuro-Geiser and Glenn Muranaka, new HDOA deputy director and former president of Meadow Gold Dairies, are optimistic about the future.

“We have a lot of state departments working together to move ag forward — in workforce development, education and connections with farmers,” said Shimabukuro-Geiser. Muranaka added, “As the governor has pointed out, we're entering an exciting, new age of innovation in ag. It's not only doubling food production. We want to get young people to embrace ag, help teachers include ag in the curriculum, and provide links to promising careers to develop a new generation of growers.”

The leadership at the state's agriculture department is working on several fronts, with the help of the Legislature, to move diversified ag into the 21st century and decrease the islands' dependence on imported food. These include:

- Developing projects such as the proposed **Whitmore Food Hub**, advanced by Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz and the Agribusiness Development Corp., to help local farmers share the cost of several stages of ag production. The site on 34 acres in Whitmore Village near Wahiawa would include a production and processing facility, a research greenhouse, a farmers' market, and warehouse.
- Expanding the public schools' **'Aina Pono** farm-to-school program and a “**farm-to-state**” effort, encouraged by Senate president Ron Kouchi, for state-run hospitals and correctional facilities to include more locally grown items in their menus.
- **Preserving thousands of acres of prime agricultural land** for food production and coordinating water-related policies.
- Encouraging **more public-private partnerships** to support dairy, egg and livestock production and aquaculture as well as employ new “protected agriculture,” greenhouse technology and sustainable practices.
- Continuing to nurture a **new generation of farmers** in the islands through traditional as well as high-tech approaches.

Other projects to increase local food production are the solar-powered egg farm, **Villa Rose**, in Wahiawa and a pilot project by **Costco** in Waialua to use high-tech greenhouses to complement crops from local farmers and replace some of the imported produce in the islands' Costco stores. Local companies such as Kaua'i-based **Kunoa** are carving out their own niche. Kunoa is supplying beef to all Kaua'i public schools through 'Aina Pono and now supplies half of all beef served in O'ahu DOE schools.

Muranaka said local initiatives such as 'Aina Pono are important on several levels. “It's good for the students, our farmers and the community,” he said, emphasizing the importance of **brand loyalty for Hawai'i**. “We have products like Kona coffee or Maui onions or aloha shirts. I think the majority of residents would buy something grown in Hawai'i and marketed as the best quality, as long as the price is right. **That's a win-win for everyone in the state.**”



AG DAY at the Capitol. Director Shimabukuro-Geiser and deputy Glenn Muranaka.



NEXT AG GENERATION: Ho Farms' siblings Neil and Shin Ho; third-generation rancher Bobby Farias of Kunoa.

Kupu opens new Ho'okupu Center to mālama 'āina and our youth



A little over 10 years ago, Kupu was a small organization with three young, dedicated co-founders and a dream: to restore the 'āina while restoring lives. Today Kupu has grown to become the largest youth conservation-focused non-profit in the state. It has more than 150 partners throughout Hawai'i and the Pacific and has generated nearly \$100 million in economic benefits through conservation work, scholarships and career opportunities.



But the human factor that propelled the dream is still there — from co-founders **John Leong, his wife Julianna and Matthew Bauer** to the thousands of volunteers, program partners, and students who are part of Kupu's mission to "learn, serve, restore." The organization's success in "preserving the land while empowering youth" was celebrated at its March 14 grand opening of the \$6 million **Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Ho'okupu Center** at Kewalo Basin. Community leaders and corporate donors mingled with the young people whose lives were transformed through Kupu.



Governor Ige praised Kupu as the first of its kind for green jobs training in the islands. "It's a prime example of what we can do as a community when we work together and invest in the next generation," the governor said. He also highlighted **Kupu's Hawai'i Youth Sustainability Challenge**, a legacy initiative announced by **first lady Dawn Amano-Ige at the 2016 World Conservation Congress**.

(top) The governor and first lady with intern Maia Mayeshiro. Kupu co-founders Matthew Bauer, Julianna and John Leong with Corbett Kalama of the Weinberg Foundation and capital campaign chair Rich Wacker of American Savings Bank.

Kupu has won a string of awards for helping train future environmental leaders through its Hawai'i Youth Conservation Corps (HYCC). Among them is Maia Mayeshiro, named Kupu's Outstanding Intern and the 2017 Miss Hawai'i Outstanding Teen. Mayeshiro joined Kupu's HYCC as a high school alternative to pursue her education. "By restoring the 'āina and our own restoration, we gained a profound appreciation of the land and the kuleana that comes with it," said Mayeshiro. "I went from a failing student to a graduate (and pageant winner) — all because of the power of this place."

First lady spotlights Hawai'i Youth Sustainability Challenge

Aquaponics, energy audits, eco-friendly sunscreen, campus recycling, and educating students about rapid 'ōhi'a death. Those are just some of the 29 projects selected statewide as recipients of this year's **Hawai'i Youth Sustainability Challenge mini-grants**. Kupu, in collaboration with the Kōkua Hawai'i Foundation and other donors, offers schools mentorship and up to \$1,000 for projects that address environ-

mental challenges. "I'm thrilled to see so many students engage in the Challenge," said first lady Dawn Amano-Ige. "These students are agents of change in their own communities, helping us to protect our natural resources." Applications for the 2019-2020 school year will be available this fall. Students in grades 6-12 from public, private and charter schools are invited to apply at kupu.hawaii.org/hysc.

Accelerating Hawai'i aquaculture



Gov. Ige and former Gov. George Ariyoshi with public and private sector aquaculture advocates.

Hawai'i island will be home to a new global accelerator for startups focusing on sustainable solutions for the aquaculture industry. "This effort aligns with our focus to build an innovation economy, advance sustainability and create jobs," said Governor Ige. The accelerator and investment fund will be based at the Hawai'i Ocean Science and Technology Park in Kailua-Kona and run by **HATCH, the world's first sustainable aquaculture accelerator**, with 10 to 12 startups per year. The project is a collaboration by the Hawai'i Strategic Development Corporation, the Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority (NELHA), and the UH Office of Innovation and Commercialization. Interested startups can apply at hatch.blue/apply.

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